

cine is vitally interested it seemed desirable that the editors should give to members of the California Medical Association this brief survey of the present and prospective relationships of those boards.

THE LURE OF MEDICAL HISTORY

The publication in a recent number of *Science* of an address by Prof. E. B. Krumbhaar before the Piersol Anatomical Society of the University of Pennsylvania brings home to us here in California the opportunities that lie before us and of which as yet we are making little use. Or to put it in a more tempting manner, it reminds us of the advantages for relaxation and enjoyment which we are overlooking.

Professor Krumbhaar's address is a plea for the recognition that the perusal of medical history may be justified by arguments both of a practical and of what for want of a better term we may call a cultural nature. As he says:

"With the inroads now being made on legitimate medicine by osteopathy, chiropraxis and the various isms, any one of us should be interested in learning about the quackery and superstitions of previous ages—yes, and having learned about them, be better able to cope with what later might become a very practical matter directly affecting the fatness of our own pocketbooks."

And in not so pragmatic a strain, but still on earth enough for the most practical of us, he quotes Osler:

"By the historical method alone can many problems in medicine be approached profitably. For example, the student who dates his knowledge of tuberculosis from Koch may have a very correct, but a very incomplete appreciation of the subject."

Personal pride in the cultural tone of our profession should also lead us to avoid the reproach that he suggests when he warns us that the name Pasteur should mean more to us than the prefix of a method of sterilization or that of Liebig more than an "ad for meat extract."

How then are we to begin, or perhaps renew, our acquaintance with the subject of medical history? Professor Krumbhaar suggests that we follow Emerson's advice and "take hold anywhere." Garrison's list of curiosities is available to tempt the most jaded interest.

"The gold-headed cane, Saint Anthony's fire, the red and white stripes on the barber's pole, the duels of physicians, the blood suckers who attended duelists in the eighteenth century in order to suck their wounds, the wound drinks of the Middle Ages, the purgative inks of the Arabians, the anodyn necklaces, quassia and antimony cups of the past as compared with the medicated milks, iodated foods and diuretic wines of the moderns, cupping and leeching, the seton and the moxa, the sympathetic powder for healing wounds at a distance, the use of the bare foot as a thermometer in the Middle Ages, the introduction of Dover's powder by a buccaneer, the statues erected to the memory of great physicians and the streets named after them, the quacks of the eighteenth century, the medical graduation ceremony, the use of bo-

tanical gardens to teach materia medica, hex-doctoring in Pennsylvania, the medical superstitions and folk-ways of different races—any one of these subjects, taken at random as a starting point and closely studied, will throw you into the full current of medical history."

The desire soon will come to fuse these isolated fragments into a more comprehensive survey of the development of medical knowledge, and for this are available such readable and reasonably brief outlines as Osler's "Evolution of Modern Medicine" or Garrison's "History of Medicine."

As has been said before, these remarks of Professor Krumbhaar should be of especial interest to us, for San Francisco possesses one of the finest historical collections in this country. The historical section of the Lane Medical Library offers not merely books about medical history, but the very books that constitute in themselves the progressive steps in medical history. A first-hand contact is possible to us that is denied to most who wish to interest themselves in the subject. Not many of us perhaps can hope to explore deeply into "*De humani corporis fabrica*," but the beauty of its woodcuts is enough to hold one fascinated before the still fresh crispness of its magnificently printed pages. In this humble way at least we may associate with the great men of the past in the only part of their personality that persists today, their contemporary printed thought.

The scope of the historical section of the Lane Medical Library has been described in an earlier number of this journal.¹ Its examples cover the entire period of western medicine from the beginning of printing to the historical studies of the present day. Oriental medicine, especially Arabian, is represented by numerous manuscripts. Moreover the physical surroundings that are so necessary to the use and enjoyment of a collection of books are found in its large special reading room and stacks which occupy the entire fourth floor of the library building.

The historical volumes of Lane Library can be read by all members of the California Medical Association or visiting physicians. Those who desire to remove these volumes from the library must either be associated with Stanford University or be subscribing members.

Professor Krumbhaar's address has suggested that attention should be called to these opportunities which lie before us, and it is proposed that in CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN MEDICINE, each month a short summary will appear describing some noteworthy name in medical history with a brief description of those of his works which are available at Lane Library. No attempt at biographical or descriptive details is contemplated, no preconceived plan will be followed. As Emerson suggests, we shall take hold anywhere, tell you very little, except what your opportunity is, and hope that your visit to the library will accomplish our purpose. And this is that your enjoyment of medical history may be founded not on books about books, but on the stones themselves of which the edifice of modern medicine is built.

1. California and Western Medicine, 1925, xxiii, 576.